

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**21ST CENTURY UNITED STATES MILITARY STRATEGY FOR EAST ASIA:
COUNTERING AN EMERGING CHINA**

by

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ABSTRACT

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It appears China is or will emerge in the 21st century as an economic and military global power. The United States National Security Strategy (NSS) suggests that the U.S. has relied on a U.S. forward military presence in the East Asian region for over 50 years, enabling it to achieve its NSS objectives. How might changes in the strategic environment influence the U.S. position for a forward military presence? These two countries appear to have fostered a relationship in the 20th century and early into the 21st century of mutual economic interdependence, yet approach each other with great caution and potential military miscalculations. Changes in the strategic environment might suggest that the U.S. may endure domestic, regional, and international pressures to reduce the U.S. military forward presence in the East Asian region. These pressures could potentially arise from China's growing regional and global influence, long-term East Asia regional stability, a possible Korean peninsula reunification, or U.S. domestic pressures as a result of U.S. military enhancements that provide smaller yet more lethal forces. History suggests that the U.S. could significantly risk its NSS by reducing its military forward presence in the East Asian region.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
21ST CENTURY UNITED STATES MILITARY STRATEGY FOR EAST ASIA: COUNTERING AN EMERGING CHINA.....	1
20TH CENTURY STRATEGIC U.S. AND CHINA STATE OF AFFAIRS	1
GENERAL OVERVIEW.....	1
U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY IN EAST ASIA.....	2
CHINESE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY	3
DEFINING MOMENTS FOR THE U.S.-CHINA RELATIONSHIP	4
SUMMARY.....	6
CURRENT STRATEGIC U.S. AND CHINA STATE OF AFFAIRS	6
GENERAL OVERVIEW.....	6
SECURITY OF U.S. INTERESTS IN EAST ASIA.....	7
CHINESE STRATEGY FOR SECURITY	10
POSSIBLE RISKS OF A FORWARD U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE	12
SUMMARY.....	12
CONCLUDING COMMENTS	13
ENDNOTES	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

21ST CENTURY UNITED STATES MILITARY STRATEGY FOR EAST ASIA: COUNTERING AN EMERGING CHINA

China's projected economic and military growth, suggests that China will emerge in the 21st century as a formidable regional and global power. Given this emergence and what appears to be a stable East Asian region, should the U.S. maintain a strong military presence in East Asia? A U.S. military presence may continue to be the strongest deterrent to Chinese dominance, regardless of pressures to reduce the U.S. military presence in East Asia. History suggests that a U.S. military presence in East Asia is the best strategy to maintain regional stability while advancing economic prosperity.

Both the U.S. and China appear to embrace a stable relationship but appear to remain suspicious of each others' objectives. Such a relationship with The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) appears to be vital to U.S. interests in the Asian region in order to continue economic and political growth. China views the US as her most important regional trading partner and source of foreign investment.¹ Conversely, China views a U.S. military presence as a major impediment to her strategic aspirations regarding Taiwan and to expanding Chinese influence in the region.² As such, China appears to view the U.S. military presence as hegemonic whereas most Asian countries view this as a guarantor of regional stability. Consequently, it appears critical that U.S. leaders balance regional and global aspirations against U.S. interests.

This SRP analyzes the need for a U.S. military forward presence in East Asia in the 21st century. It provides an historical and current perspective of the U.S.-China relationship within the framework of their respective National Security Strategies. This analysis reveals factors that might justify a 21st century U.S. military forward presence.

20TH CENTURY STRATEGIC U.S. AND CHINA STATE OF AFFAIRS

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In the 1890's, Mahan argued that navies or militaries for that matter, enabled a nation to advance its economic power.³ It appears from a review of literature that the military instrument of power supports the U.S. National Security Strategy by promoting stability in Asia. This stability suggests the advancement of economic prosperity for the U.S. and the Asian region.

Though it appears that a U.S. military presence in East Asia supports economic prosperity, China's rhetoric and actions suggests she remains threatened by a U.S. military presence. The U.S. has been engaged in the Pacific since the Spanish-American War of 1898, acquiring Guam and the Philippines, subsequently Wake Island and Hawaii.⁴ The U.S.

participated in several conflicts in the Pacific region throughout the 20th century: World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam. Afterwards, a U.S. military presence remained in the region and military alliances were forged. China's perception of the U.S. military presence as a threat was substantiated by U.S. military superiority in Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁵

It appears a U.S. military presence in the Asian region throughout the 20th century has enabled China and the U.S. to prosper economically. As a result, relationships between the two countries appear to have improved since the Korean War. Furthermore, China acknowledges its early dependence on western markets to realize its strategic objectives of independence, socioeconomic development, and security.⁶ Overall, the 20th century relationship between the U.S. and China suggests economic interdependency, with an air of suspicion towards each other.

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY IN EAST ASIA

Throughout the 20th century the U.S. maintained three goals for East Asia: balance of power favorable to American interests that included U.S. and regional economic prosperity, and promoting democracy and human rights.⁷ The military instrument appears to be the primary enabler of these goals. As a result, this suggests that the military instrument in part has stabilized the region and lends credibility to the U.S. role in nation-to-nation interactions and regional economic well being.

After World War I, President Woodrow Wilson promoted a U.S. strategy of an inter-relationship amongst U.S. military, economic, and cultural activities to advance global peace. Robert Sutter believes that Wilson's strategy promoted international order and peace and global economic interdependence.⁸ However, by the 1930s, Japan's economic survival undermined this strategy by their aggression in the region.⁹ Though Japan's aggression challenged Wilson's strategy, the U.S. remained committed to the region both economically and militarily.

Following World War II, a new threat emerged that appears to have influenced U.S. military strategy in the Asian region. This new threat, communism, became the centerpiece of U.S. National Security Strategy.¹⁰ U.S. military strategy placed U.S. forces in Japan, Korea, Philippines, and Taiwan. Additionally, the U.S. assisted Japan in building a strong economy and encouraged Japanese remilitarization in order to deter a Soviet or Chinese takeover. Military alliances between the U.S. and several Asian countries evolved from such arrangements.¹¹ Although communism threatened U.S. interests in the region, apparently a U.S. presence offset any plans by the Chinese to destabilize the region.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. appeared to have lost some of its influence in the region as witnessed by regional economic growth. Additionally, due to domestic economic troubles, the U.S. could no longer afford to single-handedly bear the burden of Asian regional stability. As a result, the U.S. was compelled to demand Asian countries contribute to regional defense.¹² Incongruently during the same period, the U.S. increased its military strength in the region in order to mitigate potential U.S. concessions to China with respect to Taiwan.¹³ As it turned out, economic prosperity appears to have enabled the region's countries to invest in contributing to Asian security. As a result, this suggests that U.S. was no longer the exclusive economic and military power in the region.

The 1990s ushered in the fall of Soviet communism, which appears to have influenced developments within the East Asian region. With the fall of Soviet communism and East Asian economic growth, successive U.S. administrations had to justify a strong military presence in the East Asian region. However, U.S. strategic leaders were reluctant to reduce the military presence out of fear that a power struggle would ensue between China and Japan as well as the continuing threat from North Korea.¹⁴ It also appears that the Chinese felt equally threatened by Soviet military capabilities. The fall of Soviet communism appears to have had a positive impact on furthering the U.S.-China relationship.

In sum, 20th century U.S. strategy for the region appears to have maintained a balance of power favorable to American interests thus enhancing U.S. and regional economic prosperity. The effectiveness of the U.S. strategy during this period also suggests that it was enhanced by the perseverance of a military presence, combined with economic and political engagement between the U.S. and China.

CHINESE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

In order to appreciate Chinese perceptions of the U.S. in the 20th century it is imperative to review 20th century Chinese strategies. Despite successes, the U.S. strategy created friction and troubling Chinese reactions. Since 1949, Chinese administrations adopted a strategy "to modernize China without becoming dependent on, and thus exploited by, the West...with the nation's long-cherished ideal to turn this poor backward country into an independent, prosperous, and powerful state."¹⁵ This strategic objective suggests how the Chinese view the U.S. and might explain why China appears to have remained suspicious and cautious of Western initiatives while striving for long-term strategy of independence, development, and security.

The first aspect of Chinese strategy, independence, calls for self-reliance and equality with other nations.¹⁶ China opened its diplomatic and economic doors in the 1960s and 1970s. At first glance it might appear as a symbolic gesture to be more attuned with the world, but in reality, it was probably out of necessity to gain economic self-reliance. Alfred Wilhelm points out that the U.S. tends to “overlook or downplay these qualifiers in their excitement to take advantage of vast markets.”¹⁷ This suggests that the U.S. may have misread China for what her intentions might have truly been which appeared to be Chinese independence through economic prosperity, while remaining guarded against Western exploitation.

Socioeconomic development remains a centerpiece of Chinese strategy. Though the U.S. strategy is predicated on the belief that economic prosperity leads to democratic liberalization, the Chinese are committed to a socialist modernization rather than a capitalist modernization even though historically a case can be made that in the end they are on a path of capitalism.¹⁸ China might view U.S. initiatives to export Western social thoughts and human rights as an intervention in its domestic strategies and as a result does not appear to want to compromise its socioeconomic development.

China's strategy is dependent on security in order to ensure her future. Throughout the 20th century, China may have felt threatened by the Soviet Union, not merely along their common border - but through Soviet support of Ho Chi Minh during the Vietnam War and the Soviet attack on Afghanistan. Additionally, other factors have had an impact on China's security concerns, namely: Japan's emergence as an economic power, the continued friction on the Korean peninsula, and lastly the U.S. military presence in the Asian region. In reality all these factors probably have been viewed as major threats to the achievement of China's strategic goals. As a result, China continued to develop its conventional military and nuclear capabilities in the last half of the 20th century commensurate with its economic power.¹⁹ China's military build up also suggests that, much like the U.S., she realized that security facilitated her strategy.

In sum, China's 20th century National Security Strategy suggests that she remained focused internally in order to ensure conditions for her future prosperity. It appears that China has and will continue to resist external influence and dependency. As a result, this strategy suggests that China will remain suspicious of U.S. objectives; as well as fearing her long-term strategy could be compromised by a prolonged U.S. military presence in the region.

DEFINING MOMENTS FOR THE U.S.-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Although it appears the U.S. has been instrumental in the stability of the region, the mere presence of the U.S. military has resulted in confrontations throughout the 20th century. China

might view a U.S. willingness to use its might so quickly as hegemonic. These confrontations might have threatened the interests of both countries, potentially undermining stability. However, it appears that both countries recognized the sensitivity and necessity to maintain stability.

To illustrate this point, two examples of confrontations between the U.S. and China will be cited. The U.S. involvement in the Korean War led to direct conflict between both countries. In 1996, the U.S. and China were on the verge of conflict when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China conducted large scale military operations in the Taiwan Straits to counter Taiwan's pursuit of independence. The U.S. reacted by deploying naval forces to the region, probably deterring escalation by China and to show U.S. resolve.²⁰ Although only two instances, these confrontations suggest that the likelihood of future confrontation is possible.

Other 20th century events, short of conflict, occurred between the U.S. and China. Subsequent harsh rhetoric and temporary downturns in the relationship suggests the unpredictability or distrust of the relationship. The U.S. strongly reacted to human rights violations in the Tiananmen Square Massacre of June 1989. U.S. Air Force bombers mistakenly bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade as part of the Kosovo campaign, but China believed the attack was intentional. In April 2001, a Naval reconnaissance plane and Chinese Air Force fighter collided over international waters, destroying the Chinese aircraft and seriously damaging the U.S. plane. China seized the plane over U.S. objections, but eventually returned the aircraft. Both countries cautiously approached these situations in what appears to have been an effort to avoid military escalation. These events illustrate how volatile situations between the U.S. and China can quickly escalate.

In sum, though confrontations or potential escalation has occurred between the U.S. and China, the two countries' relationship has continued through a cautious necessity. Other than the Korean War, both the U.S. and China have avoided direct military engagement, tacitly acknowledging the potential consequences of open conflict on their respective interests. These events might also suggest the inherent risk associated with the mere presence of U.S. military forces in the region. Likewise, confrontations or potential escalation might reinforce China's perceptions of U.S. hegemonic objectives. The mutual restraint exhibited by both countries during these incidents illustrates how the two countries have been able to control their mistrust of one another in order to maintain regional stability and economic prosperity.

SUMMARY

The state of affairs between the U.S. and China throughout the 20th century appeared to mature to the point that both countries respected common interests with caution. At times both countries may have miscalculated reactions and counteractions during defining moments. However, it appears that their rhetoric and engagement suggest their willingness to avert armed conflict in order to preserve their strategies.

Interestingly, U.S. engagement in both World War II and during the Cold War aided Chinese security in many ways. The U.S. defeat of the Japanese in World War II may have reduced Japan's military capacity to threaten China. Secondly, U.S. military engagement in the Asian region to contain Soviet communism may have contributed to easing China's perceived threat of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula in the 1990s to deter the proliferation of a North Korean nuclear capability appears to have provided a degree of stability to the region. This prolonged stability appears to have enabled economic prosperity for all, facilitating both U.S. and Chinese strategies.

The 20th century relationship included both direct military engagement and deterrence. The overall success of the relationship appears to have reinforced to the U.S. the importance of a military presence as well as conversely reinforcing the Chinese view of U.S. hegemony. Respective U.S. and Chinese strategies of the 20th century have, for the most part, enabled both countries to protect their interests and to avoid conflict.

CURRENT STRATEGIC U.S. AND CHINA STATE OF AFFAIRS

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The current strategic state of U.S.-Chinese affairs does not appear to be fundamentally different than the relations they had at the close of the 20th century. The events of September 11, 2001 provided a new common goal to defeat global terrorism, but the terrorist attack on the U.S. did not decisively change the relationship beyond intelligence sharing and a new common interest. The region's economies have grown enormously, the Pacific region accounts for over 50% of the world's gross domestic products (GDP), so its stability is critical to the global economy.²¹ China's economy has surged to become the second largest economy of the world after the U.S..²² Its military appears to continue to grow commensurate with its economic power. China and the U.S. are working along multilateral lines to resolve the nuclear proliferation crisis on the Korean peninsula.²³ China is aggressively pursuing multilateral agreements and associations with other Asian countries, strengthening Asian resolve in order to remain free of Western dependence thus building its own influence both regionally and

internationally.²⁴ Though Taiwan appears to have recently agitated mainland China with announcements of possible independence referendums, President Bush defused the issue between the two parties by warning Taiwan that they were pushing the envelope.²⁵ Thus the U.S. and China continue their vigilance to avoid strategic miscalculations and to achieve their common interests of regional stability and economic prosperity.²⁶

U.S. strategy appears to remain committed to the region. The U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) (September 2002) combined with the Quadrennial Defense Review (September 2001) laid the framework for future application of the U.S. military as an instrument of power.²⁷ China views these policies as a long-term U.S. commitment to the Asian region and is concerned about such strong language as 'pre-emptive strikes,' even though the U.S. NSS no longer mentions China as a primary strategic threat.²⁸ It should be noted, however, the goals, interests, and objectives cited in these documents appear to support a forward military presence in the region.

Both the U.S. military presence in the region and China's military build up could continue to foster an unsettling atmosphere. China appears to remain suspicious of U.S. intentions and committed to her long-term strategy. Chinese leaders and its military, already impressed by U.S. military capabilities, are concerned about future U.S. military capabilities wrought by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Transformation that will further enhance military capabilities.²⁹ As a result, China continues to build its military capabilities to offset a perceived U.S. military superiority and hegemony.³⁰ Ironically, this mutual dependency on the military instrument of power is ominous as it could result in an armed conflict as a first resort in the event of a serious miscalculation by either party. Thus a U.S. military presence in the East Asian region, along with a formidable Chinese military in the 21st century, appears to have the potential to defuse or accelerate regional conflict as the two countries secure their respective interests.

SECURITY OF U.S. INTERESTS IN EAST ASIA

The U.S. NSS, complemented by U.S. Defense policy goals, provides how the U.S. intends to pursue its strategic interests. U.S. NSS goals are for "political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity."³¹ The specific ways in which the U.S. plans to achieve these ends are:

- promote human dignity
- strengthen alliances to defeat enemies and prevent attacks against the U.S. and friends

- prevent regional conflicts
- prevent use of weapons of mass destruction to threaten the U.S., allies, and friends
- advance global economic growth
- promote democracy
- develop cooperative action with other main centers of global power
- transform U.S. defense for the twenty-first century³²

In many respects it appears the current NSS strategic objectives are consistent with objectives in the 1990s, including a need for a U.S. military forward presence.

The two primary means for applying the U.S. military instrument of power appears to be through a forward presence and through the execution of military activities in the region. Currently, the U.S. armed force strength in the region totals approximately 100,000. Based primarily in South Korea and Japan, the U.S. forces' mission is primarily to deter and if necessary defeat North Korea aggression.³³ From an alliance perspective, five of the seven worldwide U.S. mutual defense treaties are with nations in the Asian region:

- U.S.-Republic of the Philippines (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1952)
- ANZUS (Australia - New Zealand - U.S., 1952)
- U.S.-Republic of Korea (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1954)
- South East Asia Collective Defense (U.S. - France - Australia - New Zealand - Thailand - Philippines, 1955)
- U.S.-Japan (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1960).³⁴

In order to maintain these alliances and demonstrate U.S. commitment, in 2000, U.S. forces participated in over 1,500 exercises in the region and conducted 700 port calls.³⁵

In addition to the activities discussed above, the U.S. Pacific Command's Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) Plan incorporates other means for achieving U.S. NSS objectives. For example, peacetime engagement in the region is conducted through high-level defense meetings and multi-national conferences, considering prospects for regional military cooperation.³⁶ Another means to achieve objectives is through military sales to countries in the region -- particularly to Taiwan and Japan.³⁷ As an aside, it should be noted that the Taiwan Relations Act ensures a self-defense of Taiwan. This allows for U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan, ranging from Patriot systems to destroyers with Aegis Radars.³⁸ The U.S. signed this agreement three months after relations with China were normalized.³⁹ Again, this illustrates why China might remain suspicious of U.S. intentions. In regard to Japan, U.S. military sales

appear to have enabled Japan to develop a modern military capability, which serves as a deterrent to North Korea and China. According to Admiral Fargo, PACOM Commander, this strategy ensures the ability to “build on the longstanding bilateral alliances and friendships necessary to deter regional aggression and coercion, dissuade military competition, and assure our allies and friends of our commitment to them and the region.”⁴⁰

There appears to be other evolving threats to U.S. interests in the region that could undermine regional stability and economic prosperity. These threats include terrorism and the use of weapons of mass destruction as well as drug trafficking, and piracy.⁴¹ A new strategy requiring extensive military and interagency cooperation may be needed to protect U.S. and Asian region interests, especially China's. With the emergence of these new threats, it seems prudent to assume that a U.S. military presence remains vital to deter and conduct day-to-day regional engagement that facilitates a U.S. ability to respond.⁴²

Another component of U.S. military strategy in the 21st century could be DOD Transformation. Subsequently, this transformation could influence the military forward presence and engagement. Transformation is envisioned to bring significant capabilities. In general, U.S. forces will operate within a joint construct, strengthened by information superiority, lethal precision, and expeditionary operations.⁴³ Future ground forces are expected to be lighter and smaller. Future U.S. military capabilities will likely be based on our ability to collect and distribute timely intelligence. However, intelligence collection is somewhat dependent on the maturity of the theater – or how long and where U.S. forces have been operating.⁴⁴ In concept future U.S. forces will be capable of rapid deployment from forward bases, followed by reinforcements from other forward bases and the continental United States. Enhanced military capabilities, provided by a U.S. DOD Transformation, suggests possible changes in how the U.S. military is organized and forward stationed.

Additionally, transformation technology is expected to provide the U.S. with a missile defense capability. In 2002, the U.S. withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in order to pursue development of a missile defense capability in which China views as negating her current nuclear deterrence. The stated purpose of the U.S. program is to defeat missile launches from North Korea or other rogue states.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, China views this as a threat and thus, reacted by improving its nuclear missile capabilities as well as increasing the number of missiles.

A last factor that is likely to require some consideration for a U.S. forward presence is the size of the armies for countries in this region. For instance, the six largest armies of the world are in the Asian region, namely: (1) Peoples Republic of China, (2) United States, (3) Russia,

(4) India, (5) North Korea, and (6) South Korea.⁴⁶ Such an array of military capability in one region suggests that a U.S. military presence is vital to stability.

In conclusion, the extensive U.S. military strategy for the Asian region, and for China, appears to support NSS objectives. Comprehensive U.S. engagement in the region serves in part as a deterrent to China and provides regional stability. The future impact of transformation on the U.S. military strategy in the Asian region is unknown. Regional stability suggests that the U.S. military strategy enables the U.S. to maintain its regional interests.

CHINESE STRATEGY FOR SECURITY

As China enters the 21st century, she continues to set conditions to support her rise as a global and regional power. She appears to be committed to her long-term strategy of independence, socioeconomic development, and security. To operationalize her strategy, she has focused internally on her modernization efforts and will not allow external influences to undermine her internal growth.⁴⁷ Being realistic she appears to promote peaceful coexistence, but still depends on the strength of her military. As with any other country, China may attempt to undermine U.S. interests if she feels it will ensure her own national interests.

To formalize the direction of her actions, China developed a New Security Concept (NSC) that in principle defines her international relations for promoting peace and prosperity. The NSC could be an attempt by China to counter U.S. hegemony and transcend the cold war mentality. Rather than pursuing security through military threat, the NSC calls for all countries to be equal. The NSC promotes economic interaction and 'peaceful co-prosperity,' meaning mutual non-aggression and non-interference in internal affairs.⁴⁸ The NSC calls for multilateral security organizations for the purpose of carrying out multilateral dialogue, confidence-building measures and arms control, and to help prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁹ U.S. policies appear consistent with these principles; however China contends that the spirit of the NSC is to avoid the threat of force for political purposes, to regard all countries as equal, and not to target specific countries in military alliances. The NSC could be perceived as a Chinese attempt to counter the leadership position of the U.S. in both the world and region. Through advocacy of the NSC, China is seeking a position of leadership consistent with its emerging power.⁵⁰ China's approach to security suggests she is promoting a change to current U.S. strategies of strong military alliances and forward presence, to a path using more peaceful means.

Contradictory to China's NSC aspirations, her military build up appears to be formidable. China plans to build its military to defend state interests on its borders and win in war on any

scale.⁵¹ To achieve these goals, in 2002 the Chinese defense expenditures increased 20% and are expected to increase three or four-fold out through 2020.⁵² They also procured naval and military bombers and fighters from Russia. As far as key alliances, she moved to increase her security cooperation with Russia, especially in the joint exercise arena.⁵³ The Chinese continue to improve their nuclear strength and capabilities to counter a U.S. missile defense.⁵⁴ China's military includes:

- 2 million troops with a half million in reserve
- 9,200 tanks
- 5,000 infantry vehicles
- 17,000 artillery pieces
- 750 ship navy
- 3,400 aircraft⁵⁵

It seems apparent that China is building her military to respond to the US-Japanese military alliance, U.S. military sales to Taiwan, and U.S. intentions to develop a missile defense system.⁵⁶ Additionally, China is concerned about Japanese remilitarization, thus threatening Chinese interests.⁵⁷ All in all Chinese military capabilities, combined with her economic power, will be a significant global and regional influence and appears to contradict her NSC.

Another way China is developing her influence in the region is through regional alliances. For example, China continues to develop relations with regional countries in what appears to increase her influence and hopefully assure her economic prosperity and security. China joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and subsequent associations to foster dialogue on economic and security issues.⁵⁸ Furthermore, as an effective leverage against the U.S. economically and to expand her influence, China has engaged the European countries with some limited success.⁵⁹ Additionally, China signed a strategic partnership with Russia for non-aggression and for procurement of military systems.⁶⁰ Finally, China recently exercised her growing political clout by being the peace-maker in the India-Pakistan conflict.⁶¹

To sum up, China's actions suggest she is preparing the global stage for her arrival as a power. It appears that China will realize its strategy of independence, socioeconomic development, and security. Though China's current NSC implies a move toward more peaceful means to achieve her national interests, her military build up suggests she also recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong military to counter the U.S. and ensure her interests. Thus while China's NSC seeks diplomatic equality among all nations, it appears China strives to

achieve military parity with the U.S. which suggests that China does not trust the U.S. to abide by the spirit of the NSC.

POSSIBLE RISKS OF A FORWARD U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

There are possible risks in maintaining or reducing a U.S. military presence in the East Asian region. Risks could range from military arms races, nuclear proliferation, Korean reunification, or regional instability. Regardless of how global events play out, it is safe to assume that the U.S. will continue to face difficult choices of how to best balance regional and international dynamics against U.S. interests.

A continued strong U.S. military presence in the region could result in two outcomes. In actuality, China will probably continue its military build up as previously discussed. Secondly, North Korea could escalate its nuclear proliferation efforts in an attempt to ensure its security against a U.S. military presence. History suggests that both China and North Korea are threatened by a U.S. military presence and will continue their current strategies in order to counter the U.S. presence, which may lead to a miscalculation and possible confrontation.

If the U.S. reduces its military presence in the region, events of the past suggests that an arms race might ensue. China's military power could lead to regional instability, thus forcing other countries in the region to take the necessary actions to secure their own economic prosperity.

Should the U.S. maintain its current military forward presence in the region, there are potential pressures the U.S. may face to reduce its military presence. A perception could evolve that with regional stability and smaller and more lethal U.S. forces, the U.S. military presence in the region should be reduced. As China's influence increases, the U.S. could experience significant regional and international pressure to reduce its U.S. military presence. A Korean reunification might exert pressure on the U.S. to reduce its military footprint given a deterrence would no longer be necessary. History suggests that these pressures could become a reality.

Regardless of the future U.S. military presence in the region, some impact is likely. The U.S. bears a significant burden in balancing what might appear to be a far reaching impact on the region in the 21st century. History suggests that U.S. interests should remain foremost.

SUMMARY

The current state of affairs suggests that both the U.S. and China recognize that they are inextricably tied to each other's future. Yet, the struggle for dominance continues. China appears to be drawing closer and closer to realizing independence, socioeconomic development, and security as her self-reliance, economic, and military power grows. Review of

the literature reveals that both countries desire to avoid conflict, even though their two strategies could violently collide as the 21st century evolves.

Although China promotes peaceful means, she appears to send mixed signals as she appears to continue her hard line on the reunification of Taiwan as well as her military build up in order to ensure her place on the global stage. It is China's strategy that her influence continues to grow not only economically and militarily, but through regional and global engagement.

The evidence appears to be overwhelming that U.S. interests will continue to be at risk as China continues its rise. China's economy is not likely to slow down anytime soon; it could potentially surpass that of the U.S. in the next 20 to 30 years, if not sooner. It is probably safe to assume that China is not likely to engage in any activities that would undermine its developmental strategies, therefore military conflict is not probable with the U.S. in the short term. However, what are the possibilities of conflict after China achieves her long-term strategy and has emerged as a global power? Moreover Chinese national interests as a global power could extend beyond its sovereign borders, such as dependency on foreign oil to run its vast economy.⁶² Therefore, it appears the U.S. cannot assume that China will indefinitely refrain from military aggression. History suggests that the U.S. has invested too many resources and commitments to the region to allow its interests to be undermined.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As the U.S. and China move into the 21st century, the current state of affairs suggests that there might be two fundamental perspectives on maintaining a U.S. forward presence in East Asia, given an emerging China. They are: maintain the current forward presence and engagement with limited risks or reduce its forward presence, thus reducing the engagement and thereby possibly accepting greater risk. This appears to be a delicate balance for the U.S. to consider. It appears that either perspective could bring a higher than normal risk for the region, from a Chinese or a U.S. point of view.

A continued formidable U.S. military forward presence seems inevitable to accomplish NSS objectives, even in light of U.S. military enhanced capabilities. History suggests that there is no stronger demonstration of U.S. commitment than forces on the ground. Though there might be a temptation to reduce the military footprint, it seems such a reduction could compromise U.S. interests. History has shown that U.S. military effectiveness is dependent on strategic response. It appears that the geographical vastness of the Asian region might require

forward stationing of U.S. military forces to ensure responsiveness. Therefore, a U.S. military forward presence in the Asian region suggests assurance of maintaining U.S. interests.

History also suggests that the U.S. military strategy with respect to China for the 21st century will be primarily influenced by economics. As the world becomes more and more globally interdependent, regional stability does not appear to be simply an American interest. A U.S. military presence in the region for over 50 years appears to have enabled economic growth for the U.S., Japan, South Korea, China, and other Asian countries. The U.S. presence appears to have deterred North Korea from attacking, offsetting a Japanese remilitarization and arms escalation with China, prevented China from regaining the democratic Taiwan, prevented the spread of communism, discouraged the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and maintained peace among historical enemies. This stability suggests the U.S. facilitated an environment conducive for economic prosperity. Given the region's economic growth and its contribution of 50% of the world's GDP, both China and the U.S. cannot afford to go to war and thereby jeopardize their interests, the region's stability, and on-going globalization in the 21st century.

Since the transformation effort to enhance U.S. military capabilities is likely to provide more lethality with fewer forces, it could cause a paradigm shift in U.S. domestic, regional, and global perspectives. This will then certainly result in serious pleas for the U.S. to reduce its military presence in the East Asian region. Be that as it may and given the heavy armor threat that China possesses, the only way the U.S. can counter this threat is to be in a forward position of advantage.

It also appears reasonable that a strong regional U.S. military presence in the 21st century is critical to deal with 21st century threats and the global war on terror. Current and projected threats appear formidable. History suggests that there should be a regional balance to China's military growth and that North Korea must be deterred. Likewise nuclear proliferation between China, Japan, India, and others might be further discouraged through a U.S. military presence. Transnational threats will likely require a forward military presence in order to effectively engage day-to-day incidents. A strong presence, regardless of transformational capabilities, is likely to facilitate U.S. intelligence collection disciplines. Conversely, a reduced U.S. military presence could potentially undermine U.S. ability to deter current threats and fight the global war on terror.

The argument seems to be clear, that is, the U.S. military strategy should not change; otherwise, U.S. interests will be compromised in the region with global repercussions. A strong U.S. military presence in the 20th century appears to have established regional stability that has fostered regional and global economic prosperity. The changing strategic environment for the

Asian region has the potential to cause a paradigm shift in forward basing of U.S. forces. Regardless of the sense of euphoria from the current state of affairs, the promising future in the Asian region, or enhanced U.S. military capabilities as a result of transformation, the U.S. seems wedded to a strong forward presence. This strategy is deemed essential in order for the U.S. to continue to provide the common denominator that will ensure U.S. goals for political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity in the 21st century – despite an emerging China. Given the geographical vastness of the Asian region, the number of large armies in the region, U.S. commitments, and formidable threats, a credible U.S. military presence appears to be critical to achieving U.S. NSS objectives.

WORD COUNT=5942

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